

## Lifting Safely Saves Backs

Those who never suffered a twinge of back pain are probably more than lucky—they are smart; they know how to protect their backs by lifting safely. You may have heard before that the task of moving materials from one place to another by hand involves several separate steps. They are the plan, the lift, the move, and the placement. Each of these steps is important in order to carry out the task safely.



### Plan

Before you even consider performing the lift, size up the job. Is the object too large? too heavy? If so, it is likely a two-person job, so don't hesitate to get help. Next, check out the path you'll be taking, to make sure it's free from obstructions, or tripping/slipping hazards. Also, check for splinters or nails that could injure you. You may need the protection of gloves.

### Lift

The key to a safe lift is letting your leg muscles, not your back, do the work. This means you should:

- Set your feet about shoulder-width apart.
- Bend your knees and position yourself so the weight of your body is centered over your feet. Get as near to the load as is comfortable. The farther it is from your body, the more stressful the lift.
- Keep the line from your hips to the top of your head as straight as possible. Tucking in your chin will help.
- Get a good grip on the object, and draw it as close to your body as you can while you rise; keep elbows close to your sides.

### Move

Holding the load against your body, be sure you can see over it and proceed carefully toward your destination. When it's necessary to turn, move your feet in the new direction and keep your body in line with them. Twisting the torso is one of the commonest causes of muscle strain.



### Placement

Slowly set the load down (not on your toes), bending with your knees again. You made it!